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ABSTRACT

This report, mandated by Ohio's 119th General Assembly, examines the fairness and appropriateness of the state's ninth-grade proficiency test. Under the assumption that it is indeed fair and appropriate to have a single, statewide graduation standard for all students, the study focuses on the issue of whether the test, as developed and administered, is a fair and appropriate instrument for implementing the standard. The Legislative Office of Education Oversight (LOEO) evaluated the process used to develop the test and its questions, examined the differences in test scores across student populations, and conducted 40 interviews with teachers, principals, superintendents, local school board members, business persons, and parents. Twenty students were also interviewed in two focus groups in an urban school. The test measures proficiency in mathematics, reading, writing, and citizenship, and students have at least eight attempts to pass part of the test. The LOEO found the test fair and appropriate in that it was developed according to widely accepted proficiency standards, and teachers and students had 6 years to prepare for the test requirement. Passing scores were deemed achievable by most students, and the test was considered to have met its intended purpose, providing evidence that students have achieved a minimum level of education. Five appendixes present a practice test, scoring criteria for the writing test, the desired learning outcomes, and two tables of information on students passing the test. (Contains three exhibits and two appendix tables.) (SLD)

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THE NINTH-GRADE PROFICIENCY TEST: IS IT A FAIR AND APPROPRIATE MEASURE OF A STATEWIDE STANDARD?

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE OF EDUCATION OVERSIGHT
COLUMBUS, OHIO
July, 1993

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LEGISLATIVE OFFICE OF EDUCATION OVERSIGHT
30 EAST BROAD ST. - 27TH FLOOR
COLUMBUS, OH 43266

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Suzan Hurley Cogswell

RESEARCH STAFF
(Listed alphabetically)

Tinia M. Bradshaw
Anne V. Skaggs

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE OF EDUCATION OVERSIGHT
Columbus, Ohio

July 1993

THE NINTH-GRADE PROFICIENCY TEST: IS IT A FAIR AND APPROPRIATE MEASURE OF A STATEWIDE STANDARD?

SUMMARY

THE NINTH-GRADE PROFICIENCY TEST: IS IT A FAIR AND APPROPRIATE MEASURE OF A STATEWIDE STANDARD?

This report, which was mandated by Amended Substitute House Bill 55 of the 119th General Assembly, examines the fairness and appropriateness of Ohio's ninth-grade proficiency test. It is a report of the Legislative Office of Education Oversight (LOEO) to the Legislative Committee on Education Oversight. ***Conclusions and recommendations in this report are those of the LOEO staff and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Committee or any of its members.***

The question of whether the ninth-grade proficiency test is fair and appropriate includes two issues:

1. Whether it is fair and appropriate to have a single, statewide graduation standard for all students to meet; and
2. Whether the ninth-grade proficiency test, as developed, is a fair and appropriate instrument for implementing the statewide standard.

LOEO assumes that the first issue is a policy decision that has been made by the General Assembly. The LOEO study focused on the second issue: Given the decision to have a statewide standard, is Ohio's ninth-grade proficiency test a fair and appropriate instrument?

This report considers the technical aspects of developing test questions, as well as the impact of the proficiency test on students and schools. LOEO evaluated the process used to develop the test and test questions; examined the differences in test scores across student populations; and conducted 40 interviews with teachers, principals, superintendents, local school board members, business persons, and parents across the state. Twenty students were interviewed during two focus groups in one urban school district.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TEST

Administration of the ninth-grade proficiency test began in the fall of 1990 as the result of legislation which established a statewide proficiency testing program. Ohio students who plan to graduate during the 1993-1994 school year must pass the test as part of the requirements for graduation. The test measures knowledge and skills in four

subjects: mathematics, reading, writing, and citizenship. The test is given only in English.

Students have at least eight attempts to pass each part of the test. The only exemption from taking the test is for students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Programs specifically address the proficiency test.

Public schools administer the test over four consecutive days in the fall and spring of each year to students in grades nine through twelve. Students are not required to take any part of the test which they have previously passed.

Because many students will be tested more than once, several versions of the test have been created. All versions of the test are equivalent in terms of the level of knowledge and skills students must have to pass the test.

Passing standards, or cut-off scores, have been set for each part of the test. On average, students must correctly answer about 62% of the questions on the test to pass. There is no limit on how many students can score above the state-designated passing standard.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

LOEO found the ninth-grade proficiency test to be fair and appropriate based on the following reasons:

- the ninth-grade proficiency test was developed according to widely accepted technical standards;
- schools and students were given a six-year period to prepare for the test requirement;
- the passing scores were set at a level achievable by most students; and
- the test meets its intended purpose--that is, it provides evidence that students have achieved a minimum level of education.

The test's fairness and appropriateness are in large part based on the integrity of the test development process. Chapter III of this report provides details about the major steps in Ohio's test development process. Steps include: (1) establishing the learning outcomes on which the test questions are based; (2) developing the test format and test questions; (3) field testing the potential questions; and (4) setting the passing standards for each part of the test.

The process to develop the test took two years and involved many educators and citizens representing many types of school districts from around the state. The proficiency test was designed to measure important and relevant knowledge and skills. The learning outcomes and the corresponding test questions are consistent with Ohio curricula. The test development process focused considerable attention on detecting and eliminating questions which might be biased in terms of gender, race, or ethnicity.

The ninth-grade learning outcomes on which the test questions are based were adopted by the State Board of Education in 1988 and the graduation requirement takes effect for the Class of 1994. The learning outcomes and practice tests containing sample questions have been distributed by ODE annually to schools for eighth-grade students since 1988.

During the six years between 1988 and 1994, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) provided a variety of documents to assist students, parents, and school personnel to prepare for the test. Schools' preparations of students for the test vary--from adjustments to the curriculum, to dissemination of written test information, to intensive review of subject matter.

Despite efforts on the part of ODE, school personnel, parents, students, and the general public are not fully informed about the test. Statements of misinformation and misconceptions about the test were made by members of every group of respondents interviewed by LOEO.

Approximately 85% of the Class of 1994 has passed all of the required parts of the ninth-grade proficiency test after six administrations. Statistical analyses of aggregate test data indicate that a district's rate of attendance was the factor most related to the percent of its students passing the mathematics and reading parts of the test. Further analyses of test data are limited because concerns about privacy have prevented state-level access to individual student data.

As several of the exhibits in the report indicate, there is a difference in the initial passing rates between genders, among racial and ethnic groups, and across various types of school districts. These differences decrease substantially by the sixth attempt to pass the test.

Whether these differences will still exist after the three remaining attempts to pass the test is unknown. However, differential passing rates do not in and of themselves mean the test is not fair or not appropriate. Differences in passing rates can reflect differences in the opportunity to learn. Differences in curriculum, class work, teacher

preparation, levels of out-of-school support for learning, and student attendance could all contribute to differences in opportunities to learn.

While the passing standards appear to have been set with the recognition that differences exist in learning opportunities across the state, the effect of setting the passing scores for each part of the test at their current levels is to establish the statewide graduation standard at the ninth-grade level. The committee of educators responsible for determining the passing standards expressed concern that the passing standards were being set too low and recommended they be raised as soon as possible.

For a small but important sector of Ohio students, the proficiency test in its current form presents special challenges. This includes students with limited English proficiency, former special education students, and students with high grades but some inability to pass the test.

The current twice-a-year administration of the test was reported by study participants as very disruptive to schools, decreasing the amount of time available for learning. Classes are not held while students take parts of the test not yet passed. Some schools concentrate remediation efforts during the six weeks between the receipt of fall test scores and the spring administration of the test.

LOEO RECOMMENDS:

* ODE conduct research to study the relationship of the proficiency test's learning outcomes to what is actually being taught in Ohio classrooms. Particular attention should be given to those districts with large numbers of students not passing the test after two attempts.

* ODE develop a process to regularly provide information and receive feedback about the proficiency test.

* ODE reexamine the current policy regarding the passing standards, including whether expectations for student learning should be raised over time. Clarification should be provided regarding whether the passing standards on the current test will be raised or whether the learning outcomes will be enhanced, requiring a change in the test itself.

LOEO RECOMMENDS:

* ODE implement a method to code student data to allow access to individual student test scores without access to personally identifiable information about the student.

* The Ohio General Assembly make a policy decision regarding whether the test should continue to be administered only in English.

* ODE develop alternative forms of the test, alternative ways to administer the test, or an appeal process whereby students who have not passed the test can bring evidence of their proficiency in the learning outcomes to a state-level appeals panel. Alternatives would accommodate students for whom the test presents special challenges.

* The ninth-grade proficiency test be administered once each year in the spring for students in grades nine, ten, and eleven; and twice for students in the twelfth grade, in the fall and spring.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Legislative Office of Education Oversight (LOEO) serves as staff to the Legislative Committee on Education Oversight. Created by the Ohio General Assembly in 1989, the Office studies education-related activities funded wholly or in part by the state of Ohio. This report examines issues surrounding the fairness and appropriateness of Ohio's ninth-grade proficiency test.

Statewide administration of the ninth-grade proficiency test began in the fall of 1990 as the result of legislation which established a statewide proficiency testing program. Ohio students who plan to graduate during the 1993-1994 school year must pass the test as part of the requirements for graduation.

The test measures knowledge and skills in four subjects: mathematics, reading, writing, and citizenship. Students have at least eight attempts to take and pass each part of the test. The only exemptions for taking the test are for students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Programs (IEP) specifically address the proficiency test.

Amended Substitute House Bill 55 of the 119th General Assembly required the Legislative Committee on Education Oversight to conduct a study of the appropriateness and fairness of the ninth-grade proficiency test questions. LOEO conducted the study on behalf of the Committee. ***Conclusions and recommendations in this report are those of the LOEO staff and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Committee or any of its members.***

The question of whether the Ohio ninth-grade proficiency test is fair and appropriate includes two issues:

1. Whether it is fair and appropriate to set a single, statewide graduation standard for all students to meet; and

2. Whether the ninth-grade proficiency test, as developed, is a fair and appropriate instrument for implementing the statewide standard.

LOEO assumes that the first issue is a policy decision that has been made by the Ohio General Assembly. LOEO focused on the second issue: Given the decision to have a single statewide standard, is Ohio's ninth-grade proficiency test a fair and appropriate instrument for implementing this standard?

This report examines the fairness and appropriateness of the ninth-grade proficiency test by considering the technical aspects of developing the test questions as well as the impact of the proficiency test on students and schools.

LOEO determined the test to be fair and appropriate based on three main findings.

- The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) developed the proficiency test according to widely accepted technical standards--with special care being given to avoiding gender, race, or ethnic bias in the test questions themselves.

- There were six years between the announcement of what knowledge and skills would be tested and the graduation requirement taking effect. During this time, ODE provided information about the test and other documents to enable educators to provide students opportunities to learn the tested material.

- The passing score was set at a level which some ninth graders met on their first attempt, and most others have been able to meet during their remaining high school years.

BACKGROUND

In July 1987 the Ohio General Assembly passed Substitute House Bill 231, establishing a statewide high school proficiency testing program at both the ninth-grade and twelfth-grade levels (ORC 3301.0710, 3301.0711). The ninth-grade test established a minimum standard for graduation. The twelfth-grade test allowed graduates to qualify for diplomas beyond the minimum standard.

Ninth-grade proficiency testing was instituted to hold students and school districts accountable for a minimum level of educational achievement; that students would not graduate from an Ohio high school without basic skills for lifelong learning. The test assesses how well students perform on specific "learning outcomes," which identify knowledge and skills important for all students to learn. In 1988 the State Board of Education adopted the learning outcomes currently assessed by the proficiency test.

Legislative proponents of H.B. 231 expected that school districts would align their local curricula with the learning outcomes; their intention was to influence the curriculum that was taught without necessarily influencing <u>how</u> it was taught.

Most recently, Amended Substitute House Bill 55 mandated that proficiency tests be developed to replace the current norm-referenced achievement tests in grades four and six. Using proficiency tests will change the focus in these grades to what knowledge and skills students actually have, as opposed to seeing if they have more or less than their peers.

Amended Substitute House Bill 55 also changed the provisions for the twelfth-grade test. Beginning in school year 1993-1994, it is one of eight criteria to obtain a diploma with honors. The ninth-grade test remains the only test required for graduation.

SCOPE AND METHODS

This LOEO study examines the fairness and appropriateness of the ninth-grade proficiency test by addressing the following study questions:

1. Was the process used to develop the test, test questions, and testing procedures fair and appropriate?

2. What are the differences in test scores across student populations? Do these differences indicate that the test is not fair or not appropriate?

3. What are the concerns of persons in the community regarding the appropriateness and fairness of the ninth-grade proficiency test?

LOEO reviewed technical reports and documents produced by ODE and met with ODE staff to determine the procedures used to develop and administer the test. Relevant testing literature was reviewed to identify commonly accepted criteria for test development.

LOEO contracted with Dr. Gregory Cizek, Assistant Professor of Educational Research and Measurement at the University of Toledo, to provide an additional, independent review and evaluation of the technical merits of the test and test development process.

LOEO reviewed aggregate test result data obtained from ODE to determine where differences occur among groups of students. Results were also examined across different types of school districts.

To identify student views of the proficiency test, LOEO conducted focus groups with a total of 20 ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-grade students from one urban school district. These groups were racially mixed, and included male and female students, and students who had passed, who were close to passing, or who were far from passing the test.

To determine community perspectives on the fairness and appropriateness of the proficiency test, LOEO conducted forty-minute telephone interviews with a total of 40 individuals--parents, business representatives, teachers, principals, superintendents, and local school board members. Persons interviewed represented a mix of geographic regions and types of school districts in Ohio.

REPORT ORGANIZATION

Chapter II describes the proficiency test, how it is administered to high school students, and how results are reported. Chapter III reviews and evaluates the process used to develop the test and the statistical analyses employed to ensure the test's fairness and appropriateness. Chapter IV presents concerns of students and other affected persons regarding both the test and its impact. A summary and discussion of test results to date is also provided. Chapter V presents conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II
DESCRIPTION OF THE PROFICIENCY TEST

Ohio's ninth-grade proficiency test is a four-part test, assessing students' knowledge and skills in math, reading, writing, and citizenship. A fifth test part assessing science will be required for students beginning the ninth grade in school year 1995-1996. The State Board of Education established rules for the administration, scoring, and reporting of the ninth-grade proficiency test.

Public schools in Ohio administer the ninth-grade proficiency test over four consecutive days in November and March of each year. Unless exempted through the Individualized Education Program process for students with disabilities, every Ohio high school student is required to take the proficiency test twice each year until all parts are passed. Students are not required to retake any part of the test which they have previously passed.

The test is written in English. Students certified as limited-English-proficient may be granted a temporary waiver from taking the test by ODE. A student who is granted a waiver must still pass all parts of the ninth-grade proficiency test to be eligible for a diploma.

Because many students will be tested more than once, several versions of the proficiency test have been created. Students who lack the required knowledge and skills cannot merely familiarize themselves with individual test questions in order to pass the test. Examples of the test questions can be found in Appendix A.

In each version of the test, the writing part consists of two questions or prompts from which students compose essays. The other three parts use a multiple-choice format where one correct answer is selected and recorded on a separate answer sheet.

Passing standards or cut-off scores have been set for each part of the test. There is no limit on how many students can score above the state-designated passing standard. The passing standards for the original version of the test are set at 24 correct answers out of 40 (60%) in mathematics; 28 correct answers out of 40 (70%) in reading; and 28 correct answers out of 50 (56%) in citizenship. The passing standard for the two written essays is set at a score of 5.0 out of a possible score of 8.

Questions in each part of the test are divided among specific subject matter and skills. For example, the reading part has questions which assess the ability to use

directions of two or more steps, the meaning of unfamiliar words in context, and the differences between statements based on fact and statements based on inference. The writing part has questions or prompts which elicit descriptive, narrative, or expository writing samples.

The number of questions concerning each skill and subject matter in the multiple-choice parts of the test varies slightly with each version of the test. Two of the three types of writing prompts are selected for each version of the test. However, all versions of the test measure consistent levels of knowledge and are statistically equivalent.

Preparation for the test

In order to inform students, parents, and educators of what the proficiency test measures, ODE developed and distributed to school districts a variety of documents. These included materials to assist schools in adjusting their curricula and instruction.

Information for students and parents

- Plan to Graduate in 1994? (May 1989)
- Practice Test for the Ninth-Grade Proficiency Test (spring 1990; each spring)
- Planning for Graduation (July 1992)
- Preparing Your Child for the Ohio Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests (September 1990)
- Test Taking Tips for the Ohio Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests (September 1990)

Information for educators

- Instructions for Administering the Practice Test for the Ohio Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests (1990)
- High School Proficiency Testing: Fact Sheets (Math, Reading, Writing, and Citizenship) (September 1990; each spring)
- Providing Ninth-Grade Proficiency Intervention for Ohio Students (September 1990)
- Model Competency-Based Mathematics Program (1991)
- Model Competency-Based Language Arts Program (1992)
- Intervention Module for the Ninth-Grade Proficiency Test (Language Arts: Reading and Writing) (1992)
- A Resource Manual for Teachers of Writing (1992)

- Intervention Modules for the Ninth-Grade Proficiency Test in Mathematics: Arithmetic and Problem Solving; Algebra; Geometry; Measurement and Data Analysis; and Organizing for Proficiency Test Intervention (1992)
- Intervention Module for the Ninth-Grade Proficiency Test (Citizenship) (1992)
- Ohio's Statewide Testing Program: Rules of Proficiency Testing (February 1993)
- Interpretive Guide for the Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests (May 1990; February 1993)

Administration of the test

The ninth-grade proficiency test is administered in the same fashion to everyone who takes the test. Students may spend up to 2.5 hours on each test part, but may take only one part of the test each day. Instructions for taking the test are read aloud by the test administrator, a certificated employee of the school district. Test administrators are assisted by proctors when the ratio of students to administrator exceeds 30 to one.

Following each four-day testing period schools must also provide a 15-day period for make-up testing. Students who have been absent from school during the regular test administration period can take one or more parts of the test during the make-up period.

Test security and standardized rules for administration are described in ODE's Administration Manual for the Ohio Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests. Confidentiality of the test is important to prevent any one student or group of students from knowing test questions in advance.

Completed tests are safeguarded to prevent loss or damage before scoring. All test booklets and answer sheets, both used and unopened, are accounted for. Unused tests are returned to ODE in sealed boxes. Completed answer sheets and writing booklets are sent directly to a national firm, competitively selected to score the tests and report results. Violation of test security by school personnel is a misdemeanor, punishable by loss of job and suspension of teaching credentials.

Scoring and reporting test results

Questions in each multiple-choice part of the test are machine scored; there is only one correct answer for each test question. The writing tests are scored by teams of readers who independently assign scores according to established criteria. (See Appendix B for the scoring criteria.) If team members arrive at a score that differs by more than a single point, the paper goes to a third reader whose decision is final. The

scores are summed across the two writing samples to determine each student's total writing score.

House Bill 55 requires test results to be returned to each district within 60 days of the last day of make-up testing. Approximately six weeks are then available to prepare for the spring administration of the test. ODE furnishes a test for each student, and pays a national firm to score and report test results. School districts are responsible for administering the test.

Scoring contractors provide different kinds of information about the test results to ODE, to school districts, and to individual schools and students. Reports to ODE summarize results by school and school district and do not include individual student scores. These reports indicate the total number of students taking and passing the test at each grade level (9 through 12).

The scoring contractor sends school districts the results by grade level for each school. These results include a breakdown by gender and by race/ethnicity for each part of the test.

Each school building receives detailed information on individual student's test scores. For parts of the test not passed, information regarding specific strengths and weaknesses is provided. For example, if a student did not pass the math part of the test, the school is told how the student scored compared to the typical student scoring at the passing standard. Students receive individual reports of their test scores.

ODE encourages districts and schools to use the test results for remediation efforts with individual students, and to guide staff development and curriculum changes. ODE developed the Interpretive Guide to help teachers understand and apply test results to the needs of individual students, to schools, and to the district as a whole.

CHAPTER III
DEVELOPING THE PROFICIENCY TEST

The development of Ohio's ninth-grade proficiency test generally followed the standards for test development described in the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education, 1985) and the Code for Fair Testing Practices in Education (Joint Committee on Testing Practices, 1988).

This chapter describes the two-year process to develop the mathematics, reading, writing, and citizenship parts of the ninth-grade proficiency test as documented in ODE's 1992 draft report, Ohio Ninth-Grade Proficiency Test Technical Summary (Technical Summary). Four key steps in the process are highlighted: (1) establishing the learning outcomes on which the test questions are based; (2) developing the test and test questions; (3) trying out potential test questions; and (4) setting the passing standards.

STEP 1: Establishing learning outcomes

A learning outcome identifies a discrete set of facts or skills to be measured by one or more test questions. The ninth-grade proficiency test has 24 learning outcomes in reading, 13 in writing, 16 in math, and 17 in citizenship. Appendix C contains a condensed list of these learning outcomes. Below are examples of outcomes in the areas of citizenship and mathematics.

> Identify the main functions of each branch of government (executive, legislative, and judicial) at the national, state, and local levels.
>
> Round numbers to the nearest thousand, hundred, ten, one, tenth, and hundredth.

Four groups, consisting primarily of Ohio teachers, worked with ODE staff to develop comprehensive sets of learning outcomes in mathematics, reading, writing, and citizenship. These learning outcomes became the basis for the proficiency test questions.

ODE organized approximately 100 teachers, administrators, and representatives of professional organizations and coalitions from all areas of the state into four Learning Outcomes Groups according to subjects. These individuals brought diverse perspectives

to the charge to determine what is important for all Ohio students to know. The Groups met regularly to determine what is being taught and at what grades. Courses of study and curriculum guides from representative school districts were reviewed to ensure that the learning outcomes would reasonably match what is taught in Ohio classrooms.

Draft lists of learning outcomes were distributed for review and comment to all superintendents, school board members, and teachers across the state. Additional copies were distributed to media, members of the General Assembly, and to representatives of business, various institutions, organizations, and associations including: the Ohio Civil Rights Commission, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Urban League, Hispanic Alliance of Ohio, and the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association. The ninth-grade lists were the subject of public comment at eight regional meetings held throughout the state.

The State Board of Education adopted a revised list of ninth-grade learning outcomes in November 1988. The final lists were distributed by ODE to all eighth-grade students, teachers, and school districts. Districts were urged to compare the outcomes with existing curricula and to implement adjustments as necessary.

STEP 2: Developing the test and test questions

Ohio educators and ODE staff, including curriculum consultants, designed the overall format of the proficiency test and the specifications for test questions. They determined that each version of the proficiency test would contain 40 multiple-choice questions in mathematics and reading, 50 multiple-choice questions in citizenship, and the writing part of the test would consist of two questions or prompts with the students writing an essay on each.

The development of the actual questions in the proficiency test was accomplished through contract with an independent testing company after the learning outcomes were translated into specifications for the test and test questions. IOX Assessment Associates of Los Angeles, California was selected from competitive proposals received by ODE to develop, review, revise, field test, and select questions for the first four versions of the proficiency test.

ODE directed considerable attention and resources to the detection and elimination of potentially unfair questions. They established eight separate work groups, operating simultaneously, to assist with important decisions about the test. These included two Ohio oversight groups (the Testing Steering Committee and the Ad Hoc Task Force), and a Technical Advisory Committee of experts from around the country.

Individuals in these groups were guided by an awareness of the diversity of educational and cultural experiences of the students who would take the test and knowledge of the most important aspects of educational performance to be measured.

Five of the eight groups dealt specifically with reviewing test questions. Four Content Review Committees, one for each subject, were charged with assessing whether ninth-grade students have the necessary knowledge and skills to correctly answer the proposed test questions with reasonable effort. The 80 members were teachers, administrators, and representatives of professional organizations and coalitions.

An 18-member Bias Review Panel was charged with ensuring that the test would be fair to all groups of students. Panel members represented business, community groups, education, the fields of special education and women's studies, and included Native-, Hispanic-, African-, Asian-, and Euro-Americans.

According to the Technical Summary, the appropriate Content Review Committees looked at each potential question "with respect to its a) appropriateness, b) bias, and c) adequacy of student preparation for the question.... [Items were rated on] the extent to which they were representative of the knowledge and skills that Ohio students should be required to have in order to receive a high school diploma".

ODE asked the Bias Review Panel to make judgments on all test questions regarding the absence of bias; that is, whether the question would offend or unfairly penalize any group of test takers. In addition, according to the Technical Summary, Panel "members were asked to provide a judgment regarding the adequate and appropriate representation of minorities" in the questions.

STEP 3: Trying out potential test questions

The third step in developing the ninth-grade proficiency test involved trying out the questions with the intended test takers. Approximately 2,500 ninth-grade students in 50 randomly selected schools in Ohio participated in pretesting the questions which had survived the first round of reviews by the four Content Review Committees and the Bias Review Panel.

Pretesting the questions provided important data for statistical analyses which examined response patterns of different groups of students, such as males and females, or Hispanic-American, African-American, and Euro-American. These analyses, known as differential item functioning, were done to identify questions that might create unfair differences in test scores.

The data from pretesting all potential questions were reviewed again by the Content Review Committees and the Bias Review Panel. Questions determined to be unfair or to contain a content flaw were eliminated. The questions in the practice test made available to eighth-grade students in the spring of 1990 were taken from the pool of approved questions. (The Practice Test is included in Appendix A.)

STEP 4: Setting the passing standards

The fourth step in the development of Ohio's proficiency test was to establish standards for passing--the number of questions that must be answered correctly in order for the test taker to be considered proficient in a given subject area and pass the test. Ohio followed detailed procedures for setting passing standards developed by ODE, with the advice and approval of the Bias Review Panel, the national Technical Advisory Committee, and the 30-person Testing Steering Committee.

Four standard-setting panels of approximately 20 members each were selected for each subject. Members represented the geographic, socio-economic, and racial/ethnic diversity of Ohio and were familiar with what students at a ninth-grade level know and can do. After receiving methodological training to apply the standard-setting procedures, members of the four panels recommended passing standards for each part of the proficiency test.

The State Board of Education adopted the passing standards for the first version of the proficiency test after reviewing the recommended passing scores, along with data about how students of different genders and race/ethnicity groups scored. To ensure that the proficiency level necessary to pass any subsequent version of the test is equivalent to that required to pass the first version, scores for the multiple choice parts are placed on a scale of 1 to 500, and the passing score is equated to a score of 200. For the writing part of the test, papers which represent various levels of proficiency were used to train readers in how to consistently score student writing samples.

Comments on Ohio's test development process

Dr. Gregory Cizek evaluated specific strengths and weaknesses of the test development process, as presented in ODE's draft Technical Summary. He has concluded that overall:

- the test development procedures used were appropriate and followed widely accepted and defensible practices;

- the proper statistical analyses were completed to answer questions about the data obtained from pretesting questions; and
- the detailed procedures and numerous committees used to detect and eliminate biased questions were sufficient to detect any bias that may have existed.

Dr. Cizek's evaluation incorporated issues which he feels "merit consideration." Some of his suggestions to enhance the proficiency testing program include:

First, make comparisons between other measures of students' achievement and proficiency test scores. Studies should be conducted to compare how students' scores on the proficiency test compare to course grades and other tests of the same material. These comparisons were not made during Ohio's test development process.

Further, the test development process ensured that a strong relationship exists between written curriculum guides--that is, what <u>should</u> be taught in the classrooms--and what is assessed in the proficiency test. To further establish the test's validity, the relationship of the proficiency test to what is actually taught in classrooms should be studied.

Second, ensure that the testing policy clearly states the purpose of the proficiency test. The <u>Technical Summary</u> contains ambiguous statements about the relationship between curriculum and testing. As a result, districts are unclear whether local curricula should lead or follow the test content.

Third, reexamine and clarify the policy concerning passing standards. ODE's <u>Technical Summary</u> reports the Committee's desire to raise the initial passing standards as soon as possible. The document does not indicate how or when this is to be accomplished.

Fourth, study the effect of multiple attempts to take the test on passing scores. While test data indicate that passing rates increase as students have multiple opportunities to attempt the proficiency test, the possibility of correctly answering questions by chance alone, rather than because of additional learning, also increases across repeated attempts.

CHAPTER IV
IMPACT OF THE PROFICIENCY TEST

The previous chapter discussed the technical aspects of developing a fair and appropriate test. This chapter assesses the impact of a statewide test. It summarizes the opinions of teachers, principals, superintendents, local school board members, parents, students, and business representatives. This chapter also reports proficiency test results.

OPINIONS ABOUT THE PROFICIENCY TEST

LOEO used telephone interviews with adults and focus groups with students to identify the variety and intensity of opinions about the proficiency test. Participants were asked questions regarding their views and knowledge about the proficiency test, the impact of testing in their school districts, and any concerns about proficiency testing. LOEO requested adult respondents to rate the fairness of 19 stated attributes of the test and encouraged respondents to discuss attributes of the test they rated as unfair.

LOEO asked adult respondents about which concerns they felt most strongly. Most of the responses (62%) were related to the impact of the test. An additional 28% of the responses related to concerns about the disparity of educational opportunities prior to the test. Only 11% of the responses pertained to the test itself--its structure, content, or administration.

When asked, "Overall, do you think the test is fair and appropriate?" half of the adult respondents answered it was fair and appropriate, half answered it was not fair and appropriate. Reasons given for its not being fair and appropriate seldom involved the structure or administration of the test. Rather, those ratings resulted from perceptions of unequal opportunities preceding the test and unequal impacts of the test.

Overall, the opinions and perceptions communicated during the interviews and student focus groups can be grouped as follows:

- Awareness and knowledge of the test;
- Educational opportunity preceding the test;
- The test and its administration; and
- Impact of the test.

Awareness and knowledge of the test

Awareness of the purpose of the test varied among the individuals LOEO interviewed. School administrators expressed the best understanding of the intentions for a statewide test, while parents and students often discussed the test only in terms of its impact on them.

Of the 40 adults interviewed, 26 (65%) said they had seen some version of the test or the practice test. Fourteen (35%) had seen neither. Having seen a version of the test did not affect perceptions of test fairness.

Familiarity with the general structure and content of the test and test administration also varied. Students and teachers who had experienced the test firsthand used specific examples of test items to explain their concerns; several business people could not comment on test structure or content because they had no exposure to the test.

Information provided. Respondents reported that ODE provides extensive information about the test to all levels of interested and affected persons. Educators interviewed by LOEO acknowledged receiving and sharing ODE's test information. Most teachers interviewed said that information booklets, practice tests, and other ODE material were given to all students. All principals mentioned sharing ODE materials with students and teachers.

Parents said schools sent test information to their homes. However, parents also said that students often did not share this information with them. Parents acknowledged not always reading the information they received. Students stated they had read the materials provided, but could not always see the relationship between the information and the actual test.

Well-informed respondents. Responses from both adults and students suggest that attempts to provide accurate information about the ninth-grade proficiency test have been only partially successful. Some adults from each of the respondent groups were well-informed about the test. For example, some could refer to the history of proficiency testing, including proposals and legislation changing test requirements. Others indicated an understanding of future changes to the test, such as the implementation of science testing, or the future testing of fourth- and sixth-grade students.

Misconceptions. Statements containing misconceptions and misinformation about the proficiency test were made by members of all groups of respondents. For example, one parent said, "You can make one minor mistake and fail the test." Another stated, "If students don't pass the proficiency test by their junior year, they will not receive a signed diploma."

One principal and some parents thought that translations were provided to students who speak limited English. In another example of misinformation, one teacher thought the tests were designed like norm-referenced tests--to sort a certain percentage of test takers into a "failing" category. Some students saw the test only as a competition among schools.

Several respondents, among them teachers, parents, and a school board member, thought there was too much subjectivity in grading the writing part of the test. Their comments suggested they were unaware that a standard set of criteria was applied by two independent raters in scoring each writing sample. (See Appendix B.) Similarly, students in the discussion groups assumed that the scorers judged the ideas and opinions expressed in their writing samples, rather than the writing skills used to present these ideas.

Educational opportunity preceding the test

In general, survey respondents expressed concern that a single test attempts to measure outcomes in districts, schools, and classrooms that vary greatly from one another. Students and adults from all respondent groups perceived disparities in opportunities to learn the proficiency test material. Some mentioned concerns that unequal educational opportunities precede the test. Others stated they felt it is unfair that some districts have and use money for quality education as well as remediation and intervention, while others do not.

Several adult respondents believed poor performance on proficiency tests is tied to a lack of adequate school resources. They also asserted that inequities magnify the impact of the test. For example, they stated that districts with low passing rates may be resource-poor and the test forces them to redirect limited resources into test remediation.

Concerns about possible inequity in preparation did not focus exclusively on differences among schools or districts. Both adults and students talked about how in many schools, college-preparation-track classes probably do succeed in preparing students for the proficiency test by ninth grade, but that general or other tracks in the same schools might not.

Test preparation and remediation. Schools' preparation of students for proficiency testing varies widely, according to the respondents. Several respondents, including one teacher, said they did not know what, if any, preparations were offered. Others listed approaches to prepare their students for testing that included:

- intensive review of subject matter;
- ODE information booklets given to students;
- adjustments to the current curriculum to include test preparation;
- administration of practice tests;
- training on test-taking skills; and
- after-school study sessions.

Although all adult respondents reported some amount of remediation is being provided to students who must repeat parts of the test, efforts seem to vary widely among school districts. Efforts frequently mentioned include:

- before- or after-school subject remediation;
- study hall subject remediation;
- weekend classes, both in subject matter and test-taking skills;
- summer classes, both optional and mandatory;
- required courses scheduled during regular school days;
- community-assisted tutoring and tutoring by teachers; and
- computerized assistance and learning packets.

The test and its administration

Few adult respondents or students expressed concerns about the structure or administration of the test. Respondents were encouraged to discuss aspects of the test itself they perceived as unfair. Only two mentioned the possibility that the content or wording of questions might be unfair and these individuals had not seen the test. Comments made by others who saw some aspects of the test or its administration as unfair included:

- Students need to know more than four subjects to succeed in life;
- It would be more fair in certain circumstances to test orally or use performance-based and portfolio assessments;
- All of the tests assess more than their designated skills;
- The length of time between test administration and return of test scores impedes effective remediation; and
- Testing uses up a significant amount of teaching time.

. Test impact

According to adults and students interviewed by LOEO, proficiency testing has already had a strong impact on both schools and individual students. Respondents described both positive and negative impacts of the test. The two most frequently mentioned were curriculum changes and the occurrence of "teaching to the test."

Curriculum changes were seen by some as positive, by others as negative. Comments ranged from "I see an improvement in the math curriculum--it now makes sure the kids actually understand the concepts," to "My major concern is the emphasis of the test driving the curriculum rather than the test measuring the curriculum. I am not sure the test measures what we want kids to know."

Many adults and students stated that education is now taken more seriously by students and parents since implementation of the proficiency test; others were not so optimistic. Several teachers, principals, and superintendents asserted that although the school made strong efforts to provide opportunities for assistance to pass the test, student participation was minimal.

The biggest obstacle to assistance in these districts was convincing students to attend optional remediation sessions. Unsuccessful incentives included serving food during the remediation sessions. For example, one principal described buying submarine sandwiches, hiring a tutor, and arranging for transportation home from after-school study sessions for about 40 students who had not yet passed the test. Only a handful of these students chose to participate.

Respondents frequently mentioned as positive the increased accountability of districts and schools, and the idea that the proficiency "test makes sure kids have some skills if they get a diploma."

One impact described as negative was the necessity to divert time and money from other activities into test preparation and remediation. Students and adults both discussed the amount of teaching time lost due to testing. Because the tests are given on four consecutive days twice a year, students miss up to eight sessions of individual classes just for testing, teachers reported. Practice tests and some types of remediation take additional time away from scheduled classes. One math teacher told LOEO that the entire school week was disrupted at each administration of the test. He could hold no classes during testing because students not being tested were excused during the testing periods.

Future impact. The first class of students required to pass the proficiency test in order to receive a diploma will graduate in 1994. Therefore, the ultimate impact of the ninth-grade proficiency test is not known. Respondents feared that failing and not graduating would negatively impact students already economically or educationally disadvantaged. Some anticipated that low-income students who did not receive a diploma would have little or no opportunity to escape poverty by getting jobs. Some foresee increasing dropout rates due to students' giving up on school when they do not pass their first attempts at the proficiency test. Others worried about the long-term effects of loss of self-esteem for students who do not pass the test.

Respondents mentioned the confusion caused by frequent attempts at legislative changes in testing requirements. Students questioned whether testing would affect each future graduating class differently. One student asked, "If, in a few years, the legislature cancels the tests, will those of us who completed all of our classes, but failed the test and therefore received no diploma, be able to get a diploma?"

Special concerns. Survey respondents and students expressed concern about the impact of the test, as it is now structured, on several small but important groups of students. For example, students with limited English proficiency may have a good understanding of mathematics, the necessary knowledge about how the government is structured, and be skilled at reading in their first language, but lack the necessary fluency in the English language to pass the proficiency test.

A few adults suggested some form of special assistance be provided to these students. A few others expressed contrary views, such as the business person who said "English is the language of the land. If we are to be one nation, we must speak one language."

Some parents, teachers, and principals described problems with the test for students who once were in special education programs, but had progressed into regular classrooms. There was also concern for students who had barely missed qualifying for special education services, and therefore could not be excused from proficiency testing.

Several parents, teachers, and students said that some students who have not passed the test could produce other evidence of achievement. Respondents communicated concern for "good" students with high levels of test anxiety or extremely poor test-taking skills. These respondents suggested that students with good grades, good attendance, and a record of completing their school work might be best served with an alternative form of assessment.

TEST RESULTS

LOEO reviewed data provided by ODE to report the following test results. ODE and LOEO are limited in the types of analyses that can be done because the state does not have access to test scores of individual students. Concerns about privacy issues have prevented state-level access to anything but aggregate test data. Without looking at individual student scores, it is not possible to address such questions as whether a student's enrollment in various math classes relates to her scores on the proficiency test.

Overall results

Approximately 85% of Ohio's high school class of 1994 (the current juniors) has passed all of the required parts of the ninth-grade proficiency test after six administrations; 33% passed all four parts on the first attempt. In addition, 75% of the class of 1995 (current sophomores) has passed all required parts after four attempts, and 57% of the class of 1996 (current freshman) has passed after two attempts.

Exhibit 1 reports the estimated cumulative passing rate for each of the four parts of the test for the classes of 1994, 1995, and 1996.

EXHIBIT 1

ESTIMATED PERCENT PASSING NINTH-GRADE PROFICIENCY TEST CLASSES OF 1994, 1995, AND 1996

CLASS YEAR	MATH	READING	WRITING	CITIZENSHIP	ALL FOUR*
Class of 1994 (juniors) After 6 attempts	88%	98%	98%	95%	85%
Class of 1995 (sophomores) After 4 attempts	80%	95%	96%	90%	75%
Class of 1996 (freshmen) After 2 attempts	66%	86%	86%	80%	57%

* Some special education students are exempted from one or more parts. This figure represents the estimated percent of students passing all parts of the test required of them.

Source: Ohio Department of Education, May 1993

Results by student groups

Of special interest to the question of fairness is whether some groups of students pass the test more frequently than other groups. Since the mathematics part of the test has proven to be the most difficult for students, the next two exhibits focus on the mathematics passing rates for different groups of students in Ohio's Class of 1994. Forty-three percent of the Class of 1994 passed the mathematics part of the proficiency test on the first attempt. Information regarding other subjects is provided in Appendix D and Appendix E.

Exhibit 2 presents the Class of 1994 passing rates on the math portion of the test for males and females, and for African-, Asian-, Euro-, Hispanic-, and Native-Americans. The exhibit compares the percent passing the first attempt with the percent passing the sixth attempt.

EXHIBIT 2

ESTIMATED PERCENT OF CLASS OF 1994 PASSING MATHEMATICS PROFICIENCY TEST BY GENDER AND ETHNICITY

	First Attempt*	Sixth Attempt*
Gender		
Males	46%	91%
Females	39%	85%
Race/Ethnicity		
African-American	15%	68%
Asian-American	67%	91%
Euro-American	48%	91%
Hispanic-American	26%	79%
Native-American	24%	81%
Statewide	43%	88%

* Students in the class of 1994 will have a total of nine attempts to pass the test.

Source: Ohio Department of Education, May 1993

The greatest differences in scores between groups of students occur at students' first attempt to pass the test. However, the differences in cumulative passing rates decrease over time.

Results by type of district

Proficiency test results are next reported across "comparison groups." These groupings were created by ODE as a means to compare school districts with similar socio-economic characteristics. The four characteristics listed below were used to sort districts into seven comparison groups. In addition, the number of students and the percent of minority students were considered in classifying urban school districts.

District Characteristics
Average family income: all residents (1989)
Percent of students from families receiving Aid for Dependent Children (FY 1991)
Percent of total assessed property value designated agricultural (FY 1991)
Per-pupil commercial tax base: non-residential, non-agricultural (FY 1991)

Exhibit 3 presents the initial and estimated cumulative passing rates for the math portion of the test for the Class of 1994 by these comparison groups. Once again, the initial differences between groups decrease over time. The most striking contrast is between Groups 5 and 6. On the first attempt, the passing rates were 49 points apart (22% and 71%). By the sixth attempt, they were 19 points apart (77% to 96%).

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EXHIBIT 3

ESTIMATED PERCENT OF CLASS OF 1994 PASSING MATHEMATICS PROFICIENCY TEST BY ODE COMPARISON GROUPS

Socio-Economic Comparison Groups	Number of School Districts and Students*	First Attempt	Sixth Attempt
Group #1 - average-income rural	273 School Districts 31,265 Students	48%	91%
Group #2 - low-income rural	49 School Districts 6,965 Students	32%	83%
Group #3 - above-average-income suburban	108 School Districts 27,993 Students	56%	93%
Group #4 - average-income small city	51 School Districts 11,470 Students	36%	86%
Group #5 - low-income large city	17 School Districts 34,647 Students	22%	77%
Group #6 - very-high-income suburban	37 School Districts 8,675 Students	71%	96%
Group #7 - average-income suburban	77 School Districts 22,570 Students	44%	89%
Statewide	612 School Districts 143,585 Students	43%	88%

* October 1990 ADM (student count), ninth grade only

Source: Ohio Department of Education, May 1993

Exhibit 3 presents the passing rates across comparison groups. However, it should be noted that passing rates also vary within comparison groups. For example, in Comparison Group 2, the range of initial passing rates varied from nine percent in one district to 64% in another district, although the overall rate was 32%.

Statistical analyses were conducted by the Ohio Department of Education to determine what factors in districts are related to passing rates. Analyses after the November 1990 test administration found district-wide student attendance to be the factor most related to the percent of students passing the mathematics and reading parts

of the test. The district-wide percent of families receiving Aid for Dependent Children was found to be the factor most related to students not passing the writing and citizenship parts of the proficiency test. ODE could not determine how these factors relate to test scores of individual students because it does not have access to individual data.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Overall, most (85%) of Ohio's current juniors have passed the proficiency test required for their graduation next year. Although there is a difference in the initial passing rates between genders, among racial and ethnic groups, and across socio-economic groups, these differences decrease substantially by the sixth attempt. Whether differences will still exist after the three remaining attempts to pass the test is unknown.

A central consideration of whether a test is fair is whether all students have had an opportunity to learn what is on the test. The results indicate that one third of the Class of 1994 was able to meet the passing standard for all four tests during their first try as ninth graders. Approximately another 50% has passed by the end of their junior year. In effect, it appears that some students have had the opportunity to learn the required knowledge and skills before the ninth grade; most others of the class of 1994 are receiving this opportunity during their high school years.

Districts with large numbers of students who will not pass until their senior year are disproportionately impacted by the proficiency test. Students who do not pass initially may be given increased opportunities to learn basic knowledge and skills, but the effect of redirecting teaching resources to this remediation may be to deny learning opportunities to other students. Whether the impact of the test is short-term, such as schools redirecting resources to remediation, or more long-term, such as increased drop-out rates, is unknown at this time.

Differences in initial opportunities to learn may be accounted for by such variables as whether the local curriculum includes the learning outcomes on which the proficiency test questions are based, whether the instruction in individual classrooms emphasizes these learning outcomes, and whether students attend school regularly to take advantage of instruction on the learning outcomes. Differences in the local school resources for helping students learn, and differences in the out-of-school support given to learning can also affect initial passing rates.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

LOEO determined the fairness and appropriateness of Ohio's ninth-grade proficiency test by examining both the technical aspects of developing the test questions and the impact of the proficiency test on students and schools. LOEO assessed the fairness and appropriateness of the test as a measure of a statewide standard, given the decision of the Ohio General Assembly to establish such a standard. LOEO determined the test to be fair and appropriate for the following reasons:

The process to develop the test followed widely accepted standards for test development. The test was designed to measure important and relevant knowledge and skills. Considerable attention was directed to detecting and eliminating unfair questions in terms of gender, race, or ethnicity. Procedures have been developed to ensure that the test is secure and is administered in controlled situations. Uniform scoring procedures are in place.

Ongoing reexamination of the learning outcomes and content of the test questions is necessary to ensure that what is being tested remains current with what is appropriate and important for high school graduates to know and be able to do.

Schools and students were given a six-year period (1988 to 1994) to prepare for the test requirement. ODE developed and distributed to students, parents, and school personnel a variety of documents and staff development materials to assist schools in preparing students. Ninth-grade learning outcomes and practice tests have been distributed annually to eighth-grade students since their adoption by the State Board of Education. Students are provided with multiple chances to pass the test beginning in the ninth grade. Most persons LOEO interviewed are aware of the importance of proficiency testing, although misunderstandings and misperceptions persist.

Scores are reported in a way that focuses attention on increasing students' opportunities to learn the material assessed by the proficiency test; the percent passing in each district is reported and not the average score, and specific strengths and weaknesses are reported for individual students who do not pass the test.

The passing score was set at a level which some ninth graders met on their first attempt, and most others have been able to meet during their remaining high school years. Currently, 85% of the Class of 1994 has passed the test. The full impact of the test on individual students or schools will not be known until the spring of 1994, when the first graduating class is affected by the test requirement.

Data regarding the proficiency tests show that after six attempts to pass the test there are still differences in the cumulative passing rates for male and female students, students from various races and ethnic backgrounds, and among different types of school districts. However, differential passing rates do not in and of themselves mean the test is not fair or not appropriate.

Differences in passing rates can reflect differences in the opportunity to learn. Differences in curriculum, class work, teacher preparation, levels of out-of-school support for learning, and student attendance could all contribute to differences in opportunities to learn.

While the passing standards appear to have been set with the recognition that differences exist in learning opportunities across the state, the effect of setting the passing scores for each part of the test at their current levels is to establish the statewide graduation standard at a ninth-grade level. It is not clear whether this standard will remain the same over time or whether Ohio's expectations for student minimum performance will increase.

Analyses of statewide test data by ODE are limited by the inability to access test data on individual students. Concerns about privacy have prevented state-level access to anything but aggregate test data. However, current computer technology permits the access of individual student data without accessing personally identifiable information about students.

The test meets its intended purpose; it provides evidence that students have achieved a minimum level of education. Learning outcomes prescribe the required knowledge and skills. These outcomes and the corresponding test questions are consistent with Ohio curricula.

For a small but important sector of Ohio students, the proficiency test in its current form presents special challenges. This includes students with limited English proficiency, former special education students, and students with high grades but some inability to pass the test.

Current state laws and rules allow only students with disabilities who have an Individualized Education Program to be exempted from proficiency testing and still receive a diploma. Other students may receive waivers which temporarily excuse them from taking the test, but the test remains a requirement for graduation. Whether to allow students to be tested in a language other than English is a policy decision of the Ohio General Assembly.

The test is currently offered during four consecutive days twice a year. There is only six weeks between the receipt of fall test scores and the spring administration of the test. Multiple administrations are disruptive to schools and decrease the amount of time available for learning. Districts with large numbers of students who do not pass the test on their initial attempts must redirect resources to remediation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the proficiency test and its use in Ohio schools, LOEO offers the following recommendations:

LOEO RECOMMENDS:

* ODE conduct research to study the relationship of the proficiency test's learning outcomes to what is actually being taught in Ohio classrooms. Particular attention should be given to those districts with large numbers of students not passing the test after two attempts.

* ODE develop a process to regularly provide information and receive feedback about the proficiency test.

  ODE provide information regarding the learning outcomes on an annual basis to students, parents, educators, and the general community. To correct misconceptions and misinformation, ODE's annual communications should include information about the purpose of the test, its relationship to local curricula, and how it was developed. Furthermore, to ensure that the learning outcomes, test content, and test questions remain current and appropriate for Ohio students, ODE should initiate a system to receive periodic feedback from educators and students about the test.

* ODE reexamine the current policy regarding the passing standards, including whether expectations for student learning should be raised over time. Clarification should be provided regarding whether the passing standards on the current test will be raised or whether the learning outcomes will be enhanced, requiring a change in the test itself.

LOEO RECOMMENDS:

* ODE implement a method to code student data to allow access to individual student test scores without access to personally identifiable information about the student.

* The Ohio General Assembly make a policy decision regarding whether the test should continue to be administered only in English.

* ODE develop alternative forms of the test, alternative ways to administer the test, or an appeal process whereby students who have not passed the test can bring evidence of their proficiency in the learning outcomes to a state-level appeals panel. Alternatives would accommodate students for whom the test presents special challenges.

* The ninth-grade proficiency test be administered once each year in the spring for students in grades nine, ten, and eleven; and twice for students in the twelfth grade, in the fall and spring.

APPENDICES

PRACTICE TEST

FOR THE OHIO NINTH-GRADE PROFICIENCY TESTS

Ohio Department of Education
Columbus, Ohio

Writing

Your school newspaper is printing a series of articles about heroes and heroines. Write about someone who is a hero or heroine to you. That person may be someone you know, someone you have read about, a celebrity, or a historical figure. Explain why you believe this person is someone to admire.

This practice test is made up of test items that are similar to those that appear on the Ohio Ninth-grade Proficiency Tests. Please do not write or mark in this test booklet. Follow your teacher's instructions on how to use this practice test.

Reading

A Reading Lesson

1 English was not Rick's favorite subject, and now it seemed more of a burden than ever. His English teacher had announced that the students in the class were going to read *David Copperfield*, a long novel by the nineteenth-century English author Charles Dickens. The idea of reading novels had never appealed to Rick, and he immediately became depressed when he found out that this particular novel was over five hundred pages long.

2 Rick's father, Mr. Clark, was an auto worker who volunteered regularly as a teacher in an adult reading program. At dinner that night, Mr. Clark asked Rick what was wrong. When Rick explained his dreaded English assignment, Mr. Clark suggested that Rick come along to his adult literacy class. "I think that it might give you a new perspective on reading, Rick," said Mr. Clark. Rick had never given much thought to his father's reading class, but if there were any chance that it might make *David Copperfield* bearable, he was willing to try it.

3 When they arrived at the adult education center, Rick was greeted by a room filled with eager and attentive faces. One woman, who had a kind smile, looked like his grandmother. Mr. Clark introduced Rick to the members of the class and announced that Rick was going to read a novel by Charles Dickens. When he held the book up for the class to see, they nodded their heads in approval. Mrs. Green smiled at Rick. "When I was your age," she said, "I had already been working for many years. I left school and got a job to help out my family when I was very young. Because of that, I never learned how to read. I look forward to the day when I can read *David Copperfield*."

4 Some of the other class members explained how difficult it had been not being able to read. They couldn't figure out instructions, they couldn't read stories to their children, they had difficulty applying for jobs. To the class members, learning to read was worth the effort, and Rick learned from his father on the way home that they were all very sedulous students.

5 Later that night, Rick read the first fifty pages of *David Copperfield*. Discovering to his surprise that he enjoyed it, he read twenty-five more. Rick remembered how Mrs. Green's eyes had sparkled when she told him that she looked forward to reading Dickens's novel. He promised himself that he would never again take reading for granted.

Go on to the next page.

Answer the next six questions based on the selection you just read.

1. If you want to find out if someone had understood what the selection is mainly about, which of the following questions would be the best one to ask?

   A. How did Rick's attitude toward reading change?

   B. What was Rick's reaction when he found out his class was going to read *David Copperfield*?

   C. Why had Rick never thought much about Mr. Clark's reading class?

   D. What did Mrs. Green tell Rick about her childhood?

2. Rick was depressed after his English class because

   A. a woman at the adult reading center had reminded him of his grandmother.

   B. he had learned he was going to read *David Copperfield.*

   C. his father teaches in an adult reading program.

   D. some of Mr. Clark's students had told him how difficult it was to be unable to read.

3. Which of the following sentences is not directly stated but is an inference you could make from the selection?

   A. Rick's father was an auto worker.

   B. After reading *David Copperfield*, Rick might choose to read other novels.

   C. The novel *David Copperfield* is over five hundred pages long.

   D. Mrs. Green, who had a kind smile, looked like Rick's grandmother.

Go on to the next page.

4. The selection describes a series of events in Rick's life. Select the answer that gives the events of Rick's life in the order in which they occurred in the selection.

A. Rick was assigned to read *David Copperfield.*
Mr. Clark introduces Rick to the members of the class.
Rick decides never to take reading for granted again.

B. Mr. Clark introduces Rick to the members of the class.
Rick was assigned to read *David Copperfield.*
Rick decides never to take reading for granted again.

C. Rick was assigned to read *David Copperfield.*
Rick decides never to take reading for granted again.
Mr. Clark introduces Rick to the members of the class.

D. Rick decides never to take reading for granted again.
Mr. Clark introduces Rick to the members of the class.
Rick was assigned to read *David Copperfield.*

5. In paragraph 1 of the selection, class means

A. a level of quality.

B. a course of instruction.

C. a social rank.

D. an economic level.

6. In paragraph 4 of the selection, sedulous means

A. uncooperative.

B. mysterious.

C. hardworking.

D. sympathetic.

Go on to the next page.

Answer the next four questions. They are not based on a reading selection.

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Hi, Neighbor: Old-Fashioned Hospitality in Canada	54
Keep It Cheap: Cost-Cutting Travel Tips	61
Hotel Horror Stories (or "Check it out before checking in")	65
A Camper's Guide to the Appalachian Trail	69
Cruise Your Blues Away	75
The 20 Best Restaurants in the World	87
Ground Rules for Frequent Fliers	109
Auto Lag: The Drain from Driving	110

7. On what page of the above table of contents would you most likely find an article about saving money on your vacation?

   A. page 61

   B. page 65

   C. page 109

   D. page 110

8. Which of the following reference sources would be best to use to find the meaning of the word "inventive"?

   A. an atlas

   B. an encyclopedia

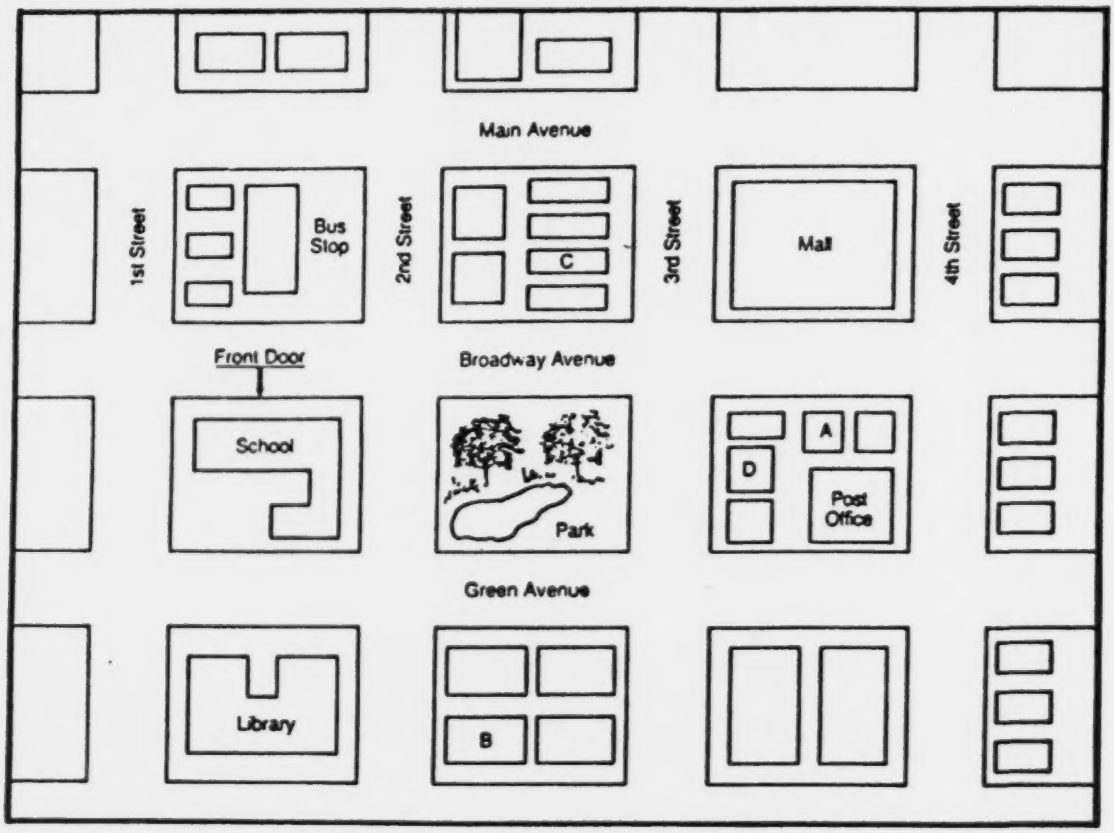
   C. a dictionary

   D. an almanac

Go on to the next page.

Directions for walking from school to the book store:

Coming out of the front door of the school, turn right onto Broadway Avenue. Walk until you get to 3rd Street. Turn right on 3rd Street. The book store is the second building on your left.



9. Which of the following letters identifies the location of the book store on the map above?

A. A

B. B

C. C

D. D

Go on to the next page.

Below is a form for registering a dog with the county.

COUNTY DOG REGISTRATION FORM

Application Form **(Please print)**

Owner Information

1. Name: _____
2. Address: _____
3. _____
4. City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
5. Phone: ( ) _____
6. Signature: _____ Date: _____

Pet Information

7. Name of Dog: _____
8. Breed: _____
9. Birth Date (approximate): _____
10. Height: _____ Length: _____ Weight: _____
11. Name of veterinarian: _____
12. Date of dog's last examination: _____

10. What is the meaning of the words on line 9 of the application?

A. the age of the dog on its next birthday

B. the estimated date on which the dog will have puppies

C. the exact date on which the dog was obtained

D. the estimated date on which the dog was born

Stop

Mathematics

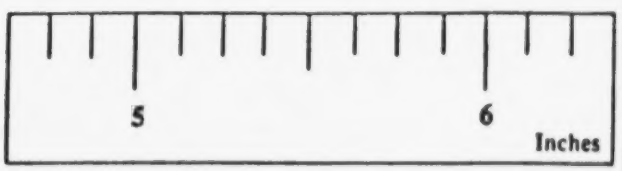
1. Carmen made a sculpture from small pieces of wood. The sculpture is 2 feet 10 inches tall. Carmen places her sculpture on a base that is 6 inches tall. How tall are the sculpture and base together?

   A. 2 feet 4 inches

   B. 3 feet 4 inches

   C. 3 feet 6 inches

   D. 8 feet 10 inches



2. In the picture above, what does each small division represent?

   A. $\frac{1}{16}$ inch

   B. $\frac{1}{8}$ inch

   C. $\frac{1}{4}$ inch

   D. $\frac{1}{2}$ inch

3. What is 30% of $48.00?

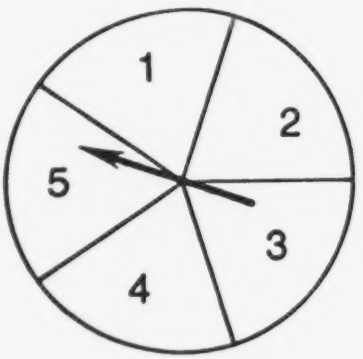
   A. $ 14.40

   B. $ 16.00

   C. $ 18.00

   D. $ 33.60

4. Eloise is playing a game that uses the spinner shown below.



Eloise can win the game if she gets a 3 or greater on her next spin. What is the probability that she will win on her next spin?

   A. $\frac{1}{3}$

   B. $\frac{2}{5}$

   C. $\frac{3}{5}$

   D. $\frac{2}{3}$

Go on to the next page.

5. Which of the following pairs of lines appears to be perpendicular?

A.

B.

C.

D.

6. There are 4 boys to every 6 girls in Mr. Simpson's class. If there are 30 students in the class, how many of those students are girls?

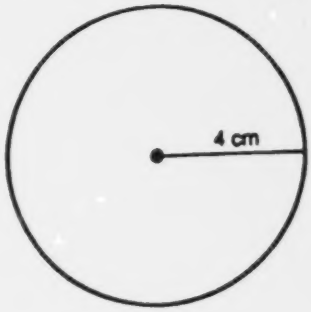
A. 10

B. 12

C. 18

D. 20

7. Find the circumference of the circle below to the nearest whole number.



A. 8 cm

B. 13 cm

C. 25 cm

D. 50 cm

Go on to the next page.

8. Which of the following is a correct statement?

   A. $0.02 > 20\%$

   B. $0.02 = 20\%$

   C. $20\% < 0.02$

   D. $20\% > 0.02$

9. Yvette is loading boxes into a storage shed that measures 8 feet by 10 feet by 8 feet. If half of the shed's volume is taken up by the boxes, how many more cubic feet of space are available in the shed?

   A. 26 cubic feet

   B. 52 cubic feet

   C. 104 cubic feet

   D. 320 cubic feet

10. A scientist learns that the hotter it is outside, the more rapidly crickets chirp. He also learns that he can predict the celsius temperature by counting the number of times a cricket chirps in one minute. The expression he used is:

$$t = \frac{n}{8} + 5$$

where t = the outdoor celsius temperature and n = the number of chirps made by a cricket in one minute. If a cricket chirped 96 times in one minute, what is the temperature according to the expression above?

   A. 12°C

   B. 13°C

   C. 17°C

   D. 27°C

Stop

Citizenship

1. If Mariko wanted to serve her community, in which of the following activities could she be most actively engaged?

   A. read a book on constitutional law

   B. buy a national news magazine

   C. get a job in a local supermarket

   D. collect canned food for a local food drive

2. According to the United States Constitution, which of the following is a first step that may be taken to amend the United States Constitution?

   A. The Supreme Court proposes the amendment.

   B. The President proposes the amendment.

   C. Congress proposes the amendment.

   D. A political party proposes the amendment.

3. Which branch of state governments has the power to override the veto of a bill?

   A. the legislative branch

   B. the executive branch

   C. the administrative branch

   D. the judicial branch

4. A particular country has rich petroleum resources but not enough agricultural land. One of the ways in which this country can supply its need for agricultural products is by entering into a trade agreement with a country that

   A. needs petroleum products.

   B. needs agricultural products.

   C. is rich in petroleum resources.

   D. has little land suitable for farming.

5. One family has ruled a particular country for over one hundred years. The king, whose father was also king, appoints his own advisors and controls the military. There is no legislative assembly, and no elections are ever held. Which of the following best describes the system of government in this country?

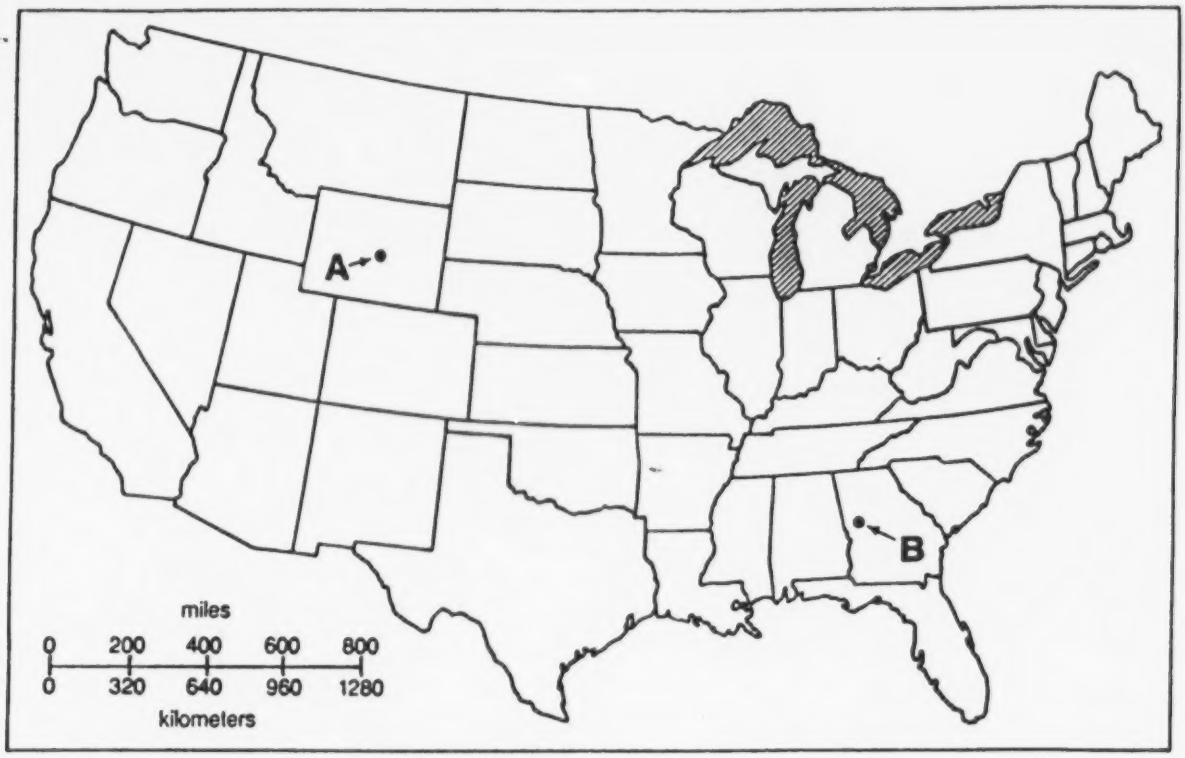
   A. a military dictatorship

   B. an absolute monarchy

   C. a representative democracy

   D. a parliamentary government

Go on to the next page.



6. Referring to the map above, if you were at location A, about how many miles would you have to travel to get to location B?

   A. 1,000 miles

   B. 1,400 miles

   C. 1,800 miles

   D. 2,200 miles

Go on to the next page.

The following statements present two viewpoints about a proposed law to fine people who jaywalk.

citizens against jaywalking:

> "Jaywalking should be made illegal. Many accidents involving jaywalkers have occurred in our town. According to police records, 4 people were killed and 23 were seriously injured last year when they were struck by cars while jaywalking."

citizens who want jaywalking to remain legal:

> "Our town has too many laws already. Citizens should be able to cross the street where and when they want to. The sheriff has more important things to do than to look out for and catch jaywalkers."

7. Which of the following statements about the information presented above is most accurate?

   A. The argument by citizens against jaywalking is supported by data that can be verified.

   B. The argument by citizens who want jaywalking to remain legal is supported by information that can be verified.

   C. The argument by citizens who want jaywalking to remain legal uses information from knowledgeable sources.

   D. The argument by citizens against jaywalking contains many unsupported generalizations.

8. Which of the following does **NOT** describe a purpose of the Declaration of Independence?

   A. to list the colonies' grievances against the English king

   B. to provide reasons for separating from England

   C. to formally declare the colonies free and independent states

   D. to establish the rights of American citizens under federal law

9. The governor's oath of office in a certain state requires the governor to obey all state laws and to act at all times to preserve and defend the state constitution. According to this oath of office, the governor must

   A. refuse to sign any bill that would amend a state law.

   B. refuse to enforce any state supreme court decision that conflicts with the governor's interpretation of existing state law.

   C. obey a state law even if the governor believes that the law should be repealed.

   D. interpret the constitutional legality of any new state legislation.

Go on to the next page.

10. In theory, a communist economic system is one in which

    A. wealth is distributed to all individuals according to need.

    B. businesses compete for the consumer market.

    C. individuals invest in the means of production.

    D. society is divided into many social classes.

11. Which of the following requirements must a person meet in order to vote in a state or local election in the state of Ohio?

    A. be a property owner

    B. be a taxpayer

    C. be a resident of Ohio

    D. be a member of a political party

12. Jim is arrested in a criminal case. He refuses to answer any questions about the alleged crime, claiming that he is "taking the Fifth Amendment." "Taking the Fifth Amendment" means that

    A. Jim is pleading innocent to the charges against him.

    B. Jim has not had the opportunity to discuss the case with a lawyer.

    C. Jim does not have to answer questions that might incriminate him.

    D. Jim is too young to be arrested for this crime.

13. Which of the following decisions will be made at a national political convention?

    A. how much money the party will spend on campaigns

    B. who will be the party's candidate for President

    C. how many new members will be admitted to the party

    D. who will be the party's candidates for the U.S. Senate

END OF PRACTICE TEST

APPENDIX B

CRITERIA FOR SCORING WRITING TEST*

A student's writing proficiency is evaluated on each of two samples and scored according to the following scale. The scores assigned to the two samples are summed to determine the student's overall proficiency.

SCALE	EXPLANATION
4	The writing focuses on the topic with sample supporting ideas or examples and has a logical structure. The paper conveys a sense of completeness, or wholeness. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language, including precision in word choice. With rare exceptions, sentences are complete except when fragments are used purposefully. Subject/verb agreement and verb and noun forms are generally correct. With few exceptions, the paper follows the conventions of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.
3	The writing is generally related to the topic with adequate supporting ideas or examples, although development may be uneven. Logical order is apparent, although some lapses may occur. The paper exhibits some sense of completeness, or wholeness. Word choice is generally adequate and precise. Most sentences are complete. There may be occasional errors in subject/verb agreement and in standard forms of verbs and nouns but not enough to impede communication. The conventions of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are generally followed.
2	The writing demonstrates an awareness of the topic but may include extraneous or loosely related material. Some supporting ideas or examples are included but are not developed. An organizational pattern has been attempted. The paper may lack a sense of completeness, or wholeness. Vocabulary is adequate but limited, predictable, and occasionally vague. Readability is limited by errors in sentence structure, subject/verb agreement, and verb and noun forms. Knowledge of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization is demonstrated. With few exceptions, commonly used words are spelled correctly.
1	The writing is only slightly related to the topic, offering few supporting ideas or examples. The writing exhibits little or no evidence of an organizational pattern. Development of ideas is erratic, inadequate, or illogical. Limited or inappropriate vocabulary obscures meaning. Gross errors in sentence structure and usage impede communication. Frequent and blatant errors occur in basic punctuation and capitalization, and commonly used words are frequently misspelled.
0	Non-scorable. A paper may be considered non-scorable for any of the following reasons: – illegible – not enough text – flagrant disregard of the topic

Text quoted directly from "Ohio Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests Interpretive Guide, Rubric for Holistic Scoring" (Ohio Department of Education, 1993)

APPENDIX C

NINTH-GRADE 1988 LEARNING OUTCOMES CONDENSED BY THE LEGISLATIVE OFFICE OF EDUCATION OVERSIGHT

MATHEMATICS

Arithmetic

1. Compute with whole numbers, fractions, and decimals.
2. Compare, order, and determine equivalence of fractions, decimals, percents, whole numbers, and integers.
3. Solve and use proportions.
4. Round numbers to the nearest 1,000, 100, 10, 1, .1 and 0.01.
5. Solve problems involving percentages.

Measurement

6. Select and compute with appropriate standard units to measure length, area, volume, weight, time, temperature, money, angles, and capacity.
7. Convert, compare, and compute with common units of measure within the same measurement system.
8. Read the scale on a measurement device to the nearest mark.

Geometry

9. Recognize, classify, and use characteristics of lines and simple 2-d figures (concepts such as vertical and parallel; know about triangles, quadrilaterals, pentagons, and circles).
10. Find the perimeters and areas of polygons; circumference and areas of circles.
11. Find surface areas and volumes of rectangular solids.

Data Analysis

12. Use tables, charts, maps, and graphs.
13. Use elementary notions of probability.
14. Compute averages.

Algebra

15. Solve simple number sentences and use formulas.
16. Evaluate algebraic expressions by using substitutions.

1. Given a fictional reading selection, the student will demonstrate an integrated understanding of the language, elements of plot, possible themes, likely motives and traits of characters, and the effect of setting, by responding to items regarding:

   a. the meaning of an unfamiliar word;
   b. the meaning of a multiple-meaning word;
   c. details (who, what, when, where, how);
   d. sequence of time, places, events and ideas;
   e. stated or implied main ideas;
   f. most-probable outcomes;
   g. cause-and-effect relationships;
   h. the differences between statements based on fact and statements based on inference;
   i. predictions about whether certain information is likely to be included in material; and
   j. the identification of questions that will demonstrate the comprehension of the main idea and supporting details.

2. Given a nonfictional reading selection, the student will demonstrate an integrated understanding of the major concepts, the evidence that supports those concepts, the possible application for the concepts, and the possible purposes the selection might serve, by responding to items regarding:

   a. details (who, what, where, when, how, or problem/solution);
   b. stated or implied main ideas;
   c. cause-and-effect relationship;
   d. the difference between statements based on fact and statements based on inference;
   e. whether a statement is a fact or an opinion;
   f. predictions about whether certain information is likely to be included in material;
   g. details that either support or do not support the main idea;
   h. the author's purpose for writing the selection;
   i. the best summary for a specific audience; and
   j. the author's attitude toward a topic.

3. Given everyday/functional reading materials, the student will identify, locate, and use information in items regarding:

   a. directions of two or more steps;
   b. the selection and use of appropriate reference sources and illustrative materials;
   c. the meaning of vocabulary words used on an application form; and
   d. the use of propaganda.

WRITING

The student will produce a piece of writing that:

1. conveys a message related to the prompt/topic of a situation;
2. includes supporting ideas or examples;
3. follows a logical order;
4. conveys a sense of completeness;
5. exhibits word choice appropriate to the audience, the purpose, and the subject;
6. includes clear language;
7. contains complete sentences and may contain purposeful fragments;
8. exhibits subject-verb agreement;
9. contains standard forms of verbs and nouns;
10. exhibits appropriate punctuation;
11. exhibits appropriate capitalization;
12. contains correct spelling; and
13. is legible.

CITIZENSHIP

1. Identify the significance of Northwest Ordinance, Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights.
2. Know that many different peoples with diverse backgrounds make up our nation today.
3. Identify various symbols of the U.S.: flag, national anthem, Pledge of Allegiance, Independence Day.

4. Locate the U.S., the nation's capital, the state of Ohio, and Ohio's capital on maps.
5. Demonstrate map-reading skills, including finding directions, judging distances, and reading the legend.
6. Know the following economic concepts:

    a. All levels of U.S. government assess taxes in order to provide services;
    b. Individuals and societies make choices to satisfy wants with limited resources; and
    c. Nations become interdependent through trade.

7. Identify the main functions of each branch of government at the national, state, and local levels.
8. Identify major economic systems: capitalism, socialism, communism.
9. Demonstrate an understanding of the concept of federalism by identifying the level of government responsible for addressing the concerns of citizens.
10. Distinguish the characteristics, both positive and negative, of various types of government: representative democracy, monarchy, dictatorship.
11. Describe the process for making, amending, or removing laws.
12. Know how the law protects individuals in the U.S..
13. Understand the major role of political parties in a democracy is to provide a choice in governmental leadership.
14. Understand the [theoretical] role of public officials in government.
15. Know that voting is both a privilege and a responsibility of U.S. citizenship.
16. Demonstrate the ability to use information that enables citizens to make informed choices.
17. Identify opportunities for involvement in civic activities.

Source: Ohio Department of Education, September 1990
High School Proficiency Testing Fact Sheets

APPENDIX D
CLASS OF 1994
PERCENT, BY GENDER AND ETHNICITY, PASSING EACH SUBJECT OF THE PROFICIENCY TEST

	Mathematics		Reading		Writing		Citizenship	
Gender	**1st attempt**	**6th attempt**	**1st attempt**	**6th attempt**	**1st attempt**	**6th attempt**	**1st attempt**	**6th attempt**
Males	46%	91%	73%	98%	67%	97%	57%	96%
Females	39%	85%	83%	98%	85%	99%	53%	95%
Race/Ethnicity								
African-American	15%	68%	59%	97%	63%	98%	31%	89%
Asian-American	67%	91%	83%	93%	81%	96%	70%	93%
Euro-American	48%	91%	82%	98%	79%	98%	60%	96%
Hispanic-American	26%	79%	64%	95%	67%	97%	39%	90%
Native-American	24%	81%	59%	97%	62%	97%	37%	92%
Statewide	43%	88%	78%	98%	76%	98%	55%	95%

Source: Ohio Department of Education, May 1993

APPENDIX E
CLASS OF 1994
PERCENT, BY ODE COMPARISON GROUPS, PASSING EACH SUBJECT OF THE PROFICIENCY TEST

Socio-Economic Comparison Groups*	Mathematics		Reading		Writing		Citizenship	
	1st attempt	6th attempt	1st attempt	6th attempt	1st attempt	6th attempt	1st attempt	6th attempt
Group 1 273 school districts 31,265 students**	48%	91%	82%	98%	78%	98%	59%	96%
Group 2 49 school districts 6,965 students**	32%	83%	74%	97%	68%	96%	46%	94%
Group 3 108 school districts 27,993 students**	56%	93%	86%	99%	84%	99%	67%	97%
Group 4 51 school districts 11,470 students**	36%	86%	77%	98%	74%	98%	50%	94%
Group 5 17 school districts 34,647 students**	22%	77%	63%	97%	65%	98%	37%	92%
Group 6 37 school districts 8,675 students**	71%	96%	91%	99%	90%	99%	80%	99%
Group 7 77 school districts 22,570 students**	44%	89%	79%	98%	77%	98%	57%	95%
Statewide: 612 school districts 143,585 students**	43%	88%	78%	98%	76%	98%	55%	95%

* Exhibit 3 provides additional information regarding the comparison groups.
** October 1990 ADM (student count) ninth grade only
Source: Ohio Department of Education, May 1993